

USCDornsife

**Department of
English**

**ENGLISH 303
Introduction To Fiction Writing
Fall 2018
(Section 32653)**

Instructor: Kerry Brian Ingram
Time: 2:00-4:20, Friday
Location: Room 203 THH
Office Hours: W/F 12:00-200
(or by appointment)
Office Location: 433 Taper Hall
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 303 is a fiction workshop providing an introduction to the techniques and practices of prose fiction. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to identify the mechanics and principles of fiction and demonstrate the ability to employ established techniques. Emphasis is placed on craft issues such as characterization, point of view, narrative structure, style and voice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students must compose original fiction, read all the stories and instructional materials and comment precisely and logically on the work of classmates.

At the end of the semester, each student will go through the process of choosing stories and preparing a portfolio of fictional narratives for potential publication.

TEXTS: *What If?--Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers, 3rd Edition*
by Anne Bernays/Pam Painter
The Story and Its Writer, Current Edition by Ann Charters

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

In-class participation is crucial in order to succeed in this class. If you are absent, the missed instruction, class exercises, and workshop critiques will almost certainly affect the grade. Moreover, merely being present does not automatically count as participation. Do your reading and come with ideas and questions for discussion. If an emergency does come up, you will be responsible for work assigned during that absence. Consequently, you should arrange to get any missed handouts, homework, or new story materials from me or from another student. The best workshop is an exercise in mutual goodwill and serious discussion of storytelling methods.

Please, **no late stories**. An electronic version of your story must be sent to me by Monday morning at 10:00 a.m. on the week of your workshop for distribution to your classmates. **Writers meet deadlines**, and timely submission of stories is crucial so that classmates can provide useful critiques (part of *their* grade!). An alternative would be to pass out hard copies on the Friday before your assigned workshop. Needless to say, subsequently missing the day you picked for workshop is not an option.

Keep in mind that class starts on time. Excessive tardiness will affect your participation grade.

WRITING IS REWRITING. Your grade will be determined in large part on the stories you complete based on the many writing exercises we explore in class and at home. Once you determine which beginnings are most important to you, your job is to NOT STOP until you have rendered your best version of that story. **Among the five works for your portfolio (two of which will be workshopped), you will choose one for official submission to a journal or contest.**

Conferences. Periodically, at least once during the semester, I will arrange an individual conference with each student to address questions and interests concerning craft or ideas about completing your projects.

Laptops and iPads can be used during in-class compositions IF the assignment is to be completed at home and IF the exercise does not require my written interaction during class.

Grading Breakdown

- 1) Participation/Completion of in-class writing exercises/Weekly quizzes or responses to readings: **250 points**
- 2) Typed comments on stories of classmates; one copy for me, one for the author.
Minimum: one page, double spaced: **250 points**
- 3) Submission of **three complete** story drafts you have decided **not** to submit for workshop, based on exercises in class: **250 points**
- 4) Revisions of **two finished** stories following the workshops: **250 points**

SEQUENCE OF ASSIGNMENTS

(This course outline, with the exception of the story due dates, is tentative. Additional reading and/or substitutions will be the rule, based on your stylistic choices and your individual needs. Use the outline to organize study plans, but check in with me in every class, and stay up-to-date. Any changes to this schedule will be announced at the beginning and at the end of the appropriate classes).

8/24 Introduction. Syllabus.

In-class: Biographical Questions

First In-class Narrative: Person/Place/Song (23/Bernays)

Reading Assignment: “The Elements of Fiction” (Charters)
“Hands” by Sherwood Anderson (Charters)
“Wants” by Grace Paley (281/Bernays)
“A&P” by John Updike (Charters)

Find a Photograph (and email it to me)

8/31 Exercise: Found Photograph Narratives

Second In-class Narrative: “On the Steps of the Courthouse”

Reading assignment: “The Sock” by Lydia Davis (Handout)

“The Lesson” by Toni Cade Bambara (Charters)

Raymond Carver stories (Charters)

9/07 So, What Happened?--Read Lies/Truths

Setting and Physical Description

“The Discuss Thrower” by Richard Selzer (Handout)

“On The Road” by Langston Hughes (Handout)

“Powder” by Tobias Wolff (Charters)

Third In-class narrative: Start and Finish: 750-word Stories

9/14 First Person Versus Third Person

In-class: “20/20” by Linda Brewer (273/Bernays)

Reading: “Lawns” by Mona Simpson (Handout)

“A Good Man Is Hard To Find” by O’Connor (Charters)

“Where Is This Voice Coming From?” by Eudora Welty (Handout)

Homework: **Writer 1 (Story due by Monday 9/17)**

9/21 Critique 750-Word Stories/Rules of The Workshop

Discuss Reading Assignments/Chapters

Exercise: “Changing Your Life” (First Person Narrative)

Exercise: List of Likes and Dislikes

Reading: “Chopin in Winter” by Stuart Dybek (Handout)

Workshop Critique of Story 1 (Story 2 due Monday 9/22)

9/28 Narrative Distance

Three Emotions/Three Paragraphs

Time and Pace (145 Bernays)

Handouts: “Sudden Story” by R. Coover (Handout)

“A Day’s Wait” by Ernest Hemingway (Handout)

“No One’s a Mystery” by Elizabeth Tallent (Bernays)

Workshop Critique of Story 2 (Story 3 due Monday)

10/05 What If?--Turning Situation into Characterization and Plot

Homework: “That Kind of Person”

Workshop Story 3 (Story 4 due Monday)

10/12 **Workshop Story 4 (Stories 5 and 6 due Monday)**

In-class Revision (Bernays)
Individual Reading Assignments/TBA

10/19 **Discuss stories 5 and 6 (Stories 1 and 2 due 3/20)**

10/26 Discuss stories **1 and 2**
Reading Assignment: TBA

10/31 Discuss stories **3 and 4**
Reading: TBA

11/02 Discuss stories **5 and 6**
Reading: TBA

11/09 How to Submit to Magazines, Contests/Investigate Your Local Resources
Reading: TBA

11/16 **In-class Conferences: Review of All Revisions**
Reading: TBA

THANKSGIVING BREAK 11/21-11/25

11/30 Essay: “Writing In The Cold” by Ted Solotoroff
Essay: “The Writing Habit” by David Huddle

12/07 (Friday by 4:00) Final Exam = Final Submission of Portfolios: Two workshopped revisions and three completed story drafts based on in-class exercises. Cover letters with addressed envelopes are also due.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086 Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

USC Support and Advocacy (USCSA) – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu

SCHEDULE FOR FIRST WORKSHOPS

(Indicate your 1st and 2nd Choices)

9/21

9/28

10/5

10/12

10/19